

Adventures in Education

DNRC Summer Youth Camps

Montana Envirothon

April 24-25, 2006

The Montana Envirothon assists high-school age students learn more about five different natural resource areas. This program is sponsored by the Montana Association of Conservation Districts (MACD) and cooperating agencies. The Envirothon offers hands-on instruction and problem solving for environmentally concerned students. Five-member teams made up of students from the same school enrolled in grades 9-12 compete locally and regionally with the winning team advancing to the state competition. Sponsorship is available through your local conservation district. The state competition for the Envirothon was held in **Lewistown**.



Photos by Ross Campbell

Montana Range Days

June 19-21, 2006

Montana Range Days is an annual event that celebrates the importance of rangelands in Montana! In 2006, Range Days will be held in **Clyde Park**. This three-day competition welcomes people of all ages allowing fun for the entire family. The event rotates across the state every two years. The competition is separated by divisions: Buckaroos(4-8 years); Super Starters (9-11 years); Wranglers (12-13 years); Youth (14-19 years old and have not graduated from high school); and, Adult; Open Adult; Rancher Division (contest optional); and, Management Tour Group (no contest). Registration before June 1 is \$80/family or \$30/individual. After June 1 registration is \$85/family and \$35/individual. Mail completed registration forms and payments to:
**Montana Range Days
Park Conservation District
5242 Highway 89 South
Livingston, MT 59047**



Montana Natural Resources Youth Camp

July 23-28, 2006

Campers attending the Montana Natural Resources Youth Camp spend one week at the **Lubrecht State Forest east of Missoula** learning about forestry, water, soils, geology, range, wildlife, recreation and having a lot of fun. The camp is open to all youth entering grades 10-12. The cost of the camp is \$175 which includes meals, supplies and lodging. Sponsorship may be available through your local conservation district.



Montana Youth Range Camp

July 10-14, 2006

Range Camp is a five-day program open to all students ages 12-18. The camp provides students the opportunity to become aware of the value and potential of Montana's largest resource--rangeland. The camp will be held at the **Farmer's Union Arrowpeak Camp located 40 miles east of Great Falls**. Registration is \$100, which includes meals, lodging, and supplies. Sponsorship may be available through your local conservation district.



Contact

To answer further questions or for scholarship and application information, contact your local conservation district or logon to the Montana Department of Natural Resources website at www.dnrc.mt.gov/cardd/camps/default.asp or by calling 406/444-6667.



SPRING 2006



THE Woodsmith

.. he's 'Sawing Logs'!...

ON The Waterfront!

.. the 11-line call center has answered over 8,000 calls ...

OUR Back Page

.. check out the CAMPS ! ...

15 Fire Rigs Ready, Set, Go...

Since the early 1970's, a relatively anonymous section within DNRC's Forestry Division, known as the Equipment Development Center and commonly referred to as the EDC, has been responsible for designing and developing wildland firefighting vehicles and equipment to support both DNRC's Direct Protection Program and the State/County Cooperative Fire Program. And to its credit, quietly creating state of the art fire equipment for use primarily by DNRC wildland firefighters and rural, county and volunteer fire departments statewide. The EDC develops and transforms everything from Type VI wildland engines to helicopter fuel trucks. And, in doing so, has not only turned some heads but has saved the State of Montana and taxpayers thousands of dollars.

The EDC's 11 member crew has made their living by building brand new wildland fire trucks for DNRC firefighters as well as refurbishing older military vehicles (*photo on page 2*) and other used federal vehicles and equipment into reliable, serviceable wildland fire engines for volunteer fire departments scattered throughout Montana.

The vehicles developed for DNRC crews for their direct protection responsibility are new vehicle

Please see 'Fire Rigs' . . . on inside page

FROM THE DIRECTOR

A great big thanks to all of you DNRC employees who participated in the three roundtables over the last several months! I appreciate also the work of the organizers – Tony Liane, Sharon Moore, Clive Rooney and many others. I've just reread the summary notes that Marc Scow prepared. They are available to you on the front of the DNRC intranet. DNRC staffers contributed some terrific ideas while making new acquaintances across the agency. Again, I thank all of you for your time and brain power!

The four C's – who can remember all of them? Let me try – **communication, collaboration, cooperation, and coordination**. These were the buzz words for our recent roundtables, and, although it might seem a little simplistic, working on these activities can make a difference in the effectiveness of DNRC now and in the future. In implementing the four C's, I'm going to outline the "next steps" towards realizing some of your proposals.

After reviewing the summary comments from all of the roundtables with the leadership team, we found three main themes: **internal integration, public outreach, and information technology (IT) initiatives**. **Internal integration** includes ways that we share resources, coordinate projects, and increase efficiency. **Public outreach** covers involvement of stakeholders, education of the public, and basically, "tooting our own horn." **IT initiatives** are directed primarily at GIS, but include the many ways in which we can use technology to better communicate and serve the public.

Given these three themes, we will be developing three steering committees for implementing your ideas – maybe coming up with new proposals, too! We will give the committees clear direction and time frames for their work. But, most important of all, we need you to participate! We need a cross section of DNRC staff from all divisions. If you have an interest in coming up with possible projects in the theme areas, please contact the following people by May 31st. These people will function as committee coordinators:

**Internal Integration — Mary Sexton/ Lucy Richards — 444-2074
Scott Irvin — 538-7459 Bill Schultz — 721-4284**

Public Outreach — Dan Bushnell — 444-0465 Paula Rosenthal — 542-4235

IT Initiatives — Rick Bush — 444-6715 David Groeschl — 542-4306

Mary



Director Mary Sexton
PHOTO By the Governor's Office

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FINIS

"To help ensure Montana's land and water resources provide benefits for present and future generations"

DNRC Conversation is an employee newsletter published quarterly by the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation. Please send news articles or ideas for articles to your division liaison or to any member of the Editorial Board.

Persons with disabilities who need an alternative, accessible format of this document should contact DNRC at the address above. Phone 406 444-2074 or fax 406 444-2684.



chassis with new pumps, truck beds, hose and assorted equipment. These vehicles are state of the art with many modifications and alterations incorporated into their design for use by DNRC crews. For example, the control panel for the pumping units is an EDC design. DNRC crews use these vehicles to provide direct fire suppression on the 5 million acres of responsibility DNRC has in Montana. Annually, DNRC purchases approximately 10 new 1-ton chassis from a dealer and the EDC outfits them with a new firefighting package for use in our initial attack stations, mainly in western and central Montana. Upon completion of its tour of duty, which is generally five years as a direct protection vehicle, the truck is returned to the EDC for refurbishing and is returned to service with a rural, county or volunteer fire department.

In addition to building brand new vehicles, the EDC also refurbishes vehicle obtained through the Federal Excess Property Program (FEPP) from agencies like the Bureau of Land Management, the U.S. Forest Service, and the military. Once restored, the vehicles are distributed to rural, county, and volunteer fire departments statewide based on need. These fire departments rely on these vehicles to assist DNRC in its initial attack responsibility on approximately two-thirds of the remaining state or roughly 45 million acres, primarily in eastern Montana.

The refurbishing and development of a FEPP vehicle includes tearing the vehicle down to the frame, inspecting the parts and pieces, replacing and repairing those parts and pieces, and then painstaking rebuilding each vehicle component by component. This ensures that all parts are working as they should. The end result is a durable and reliable piece of firefighting equipment that is essentially new and will see years of service. According to DNRC EDC Manager, Todd Klemman, it takes about 2 1/2 months to transform a vehicle into the final product, as seen in the picture below.



Refurbished wildland engine

Photo: Todd Klemann

tion that provided for DNRC to develop 15 new county co-op engines. Those engines are on schedule to be delivered starting in May. These 15 engines are combination of new vehicle chassis and FEPP developed trucks all decked out with new beds and pumping units and complete firefighting complement (i.e., hoses, firefighting tools, connections, etc.).

What will 15 new engines mean for the upcoming fire season? Quite a bit, according to Klemann. Local fire departments are often located in remote areas with little tax base to allow for the purchase of this type of equipment. But, these departments play a huge role in the initial attack of wildland fires in eastern Montana. That role falls under the jurisdiction of the State and County Co-op Fire Program, administered by DNRC’s Fire & Aviation Bureau. At a substantial savings to the state, the pro-

gram puts the initial attack responsibility on these fire departments on behalf of DNRC. These departments provide protection for approximately 45 million acres of central and eastern Montana. In return, DNRC provides the departments with training, equipment, and support on larger fires. “The idea is that these local folks know the country better than DNRC folks and they are usually the first on scene anyhow. With the right equipment, they can suppress a fire before it ever gets large,” Klemann explained.

EDC Hub for Fire Equipment

On average, the EDC annually, develops approximately 19 engines, constructs 19 flatbed slip-on units for pickup trucks, and rebuilds 59 pump panels and pump heads. In addition to building fire equipment, the EDC is

the hub of other fire equipment for DNRC. The fire cache (warehouse) is also located at the EDC along with the DNRC Radio Communications program. “We provide the support to the DNRC field offices as well as our rural, county and volunteer fire departments through our EDC. And, we do a pretty good job,” Klemann explained.

That’s putting it lightly! The EDC provides quite a cost saving for DNRC and Montana taxpayers as well. For example, a Type VI wildland engine, which is the most commonly developed wildland firefighting engine, costs DNRC about \$37,542 to rebuild for use. In comparison, to have that same engine built or purchased from a contractor would cost about \$64,000.

In addition to the cost savings, the EDC has made some impressive modifications to the water tanks, pump units, hose connections and storage units used on these engines and equipment based on comments and suggestions from the field. “We take the comments from the fire departments and our own crews that use our equipment and make modifications as necessary. Most of the suggestions have been good ones, making the equipment work better, are more operator friendly, reduce wear and tear on the equipment, or provide for ease of repair in the field,” Klemann explained.

Klemann knows that his job is more than just building equipment, it’s about safety. “All the equipment that we build sees fire. And with that in mind, safety and reliability are paramount for my crew because we don’t know if someone’s home or life may depend on this equipment working. So, we work to that standard.”

For more information about the EDC, visit them on the DNRC website at:

www.dnrc.mt.gov/forestry/fire/suppression/edc.asp



FEPP vehicle before restoration

Photo: Todd Klemann



THE WOODSMITH

(Let the ‘Chips’ Fall Where They May)

You may only see him as easy-going administrator of one of the busiest divisions within DNRC, and that is true, but there is also another side to Tom Richmond, Administrator of the Montana Board of Oil & Gas Conservation (MBOGC).

Richmond, a nearly 25 year employee of DNRC, started out with DNRC as a Petroleum Engineer before being appointed Administrator in 1990. But, what is more intriguing about Tom is his hobby of woodworking, fine woodworking.

According to Tom, his hobby has turned into more of a part time job now as he finds himself in his 13x27 foot workshop most evenings and weekends just to keep up with the demand. Although he doesn’t sell his furniture commercially, he does have a few dedicated customers, one in particular. “My best customer is my wife,” he smiles. “Most of the un-upholstered furniture and a few of the cabinets in our house I’ve made by hand,” he explains.

In addition to coffee tables, cabinets and end tables, Richmond also makes a variety of bowls and boxes. “It’s whatever tickles my fancy to make with the wood I have available,” he continues. And he has quite a collection of wood. When asked about the most exotic wood he has turned into something, “I made some small boxes out of Bubinga wood, which is a hardwood from West Africa. And, I’ve used Paducah wood, also from West Africa,” he said with a grin.

However, most of the wood he uses is acquired from local sources. “My best supplier is the tree trim guy. We have a variety of trees grown locally here in Billings and the surrounding area. It’s fun to see what I can make with the local woods,” he said.

Working with wood since his childhood, Tom finds it a relaxing get away from his usual hectic work pace. In addition to his hobby Tom likes to fish and do a bit of gardening. “It gets my mind off my everyday troubles and onto something more enjoyable,” he stated. We should all be so lucky!

Below are select samples of Tom’s work.

Photos Courtesy Tom Richmond



DNRC gearing up for GIS

Expanding the use of Geographical Information System (GIS) data within DNRC has been identified as a top agency priority.

Whether the area is state lands, water rights, conservation districts, forestry or fighting wildfire - GIS plays a critical role in helping agency staff and the public understand what is happening on the ground. GIS capabilities have already been incorporated in areas such as water rights and trust lands. A committee of GIS specialists from the various divisions has been working on a expand GIS integration with other applications DNRC has - both for internal and public use.

A GIS system and staff were identified as the top IT priority in the 2006-2011 IT Plan recently submitted to the Department of Administration. Plans call for hiring a GIS coordinator and building a GIS infrastructure (computers and applications) that can be used by staff throughout the department.

Future plans call for testing field units for gathering GIS data for Trust Lands, improving GIS systems for Water Rights and building GIS features into many of the applications the public uses in working with DNRC.

Stay tuned for more details!

On The Waterfront . . . an HB 22 Update

The water adjudications bill, House Bill 22, has been keeping DNRC offices hopping. Since the first billing in December, the 11-line call center has answered over 8,000 calls and the 8 regional water offices have handled over 54, 000 questions.

In July of 2005, 29 new water resource specialists were hired to help the 12 existing staff in the Water Resources Division (WRD) regional offices to complete the claim examination process in the next 10 years. Since then, 4,697 water claims have been examined, 50,953 still need to be examined.

In December of 2005, 108,000 bills were mailed with a goal of \$6.2 million generated revenue; \$4.879 million dollars have already been collected through partial or full payments. Some 3,400+ water users have appealed the adjudication fees.

The WRD staff have made address corrections or updates totaling 55,217, with 9,811 ownership updates received since October 5, 2005.

The water rights database was updated in 2005 and more improvements are coming. The database is the central record system of all water rights in Montana. The database now allows the Water Rights Bureau to issue decrees* as ordered by the Water Court; already, two have been issued from the updated system on the Teton River and Union Creek basins.

The water adjudication process is moving forward. To keep updated on the status of this project, please see the House Bill 22 website at:

http://dnrc.mt.gov/house_bill22/

*A decree is the preliminary decree by the Water Court that sets out the elements of all the water rights: owner, purpose, priority date, source, point of diversion and place of use. After the decree is issued the Court sets an objection period that enables other water right holders to file objections if they believe there are claims in the source that are inaccurate or ballooned. After the objection deadline, the Water Court will begin to conduct conferences and hearings with the parties.